

Gruelling work no fairy tale on Turkey's famed soap operas

Featuring heartthrob heroes, emancipated heroines and picturesque scenery, Turkish television drama series have taken the world by storm, gaining faithful audiences in dozens of countries across Europe, the Middle East and even the Americas. But life on the sets of the dramas—with episodes that can last up to three hours in series of up to 50 parts—is not all glitz and glamour. It is fraught with grueling work, with crews routinely clocking 15 to 18-hour days at the expense of their families, their health, and even their lives.

"The worst day I ever worked on a show was 27 hours" young Turkish actress Elif Nur Kerkuk told AFP. "It was like going back to slavery." Kerkuk recalled how last year after 24 hours of shooting in central Turkey, the whole crew was piled on a bus and taken to Istanbul for another day of filming, with neither time to sleep nor prepare. "I asked myself, is this it?... Is this going to be my life?" she asked. "But I stay in because I love it."

'No respect for life'

A number of fatal accidents have prompted unions and actors to organize an industry-wide movement to put pressure on production companies and government to improve standards. Selin Erden, a 26-year-old video assistant for the hit teen drama "Arka Sıradakiler" (Those at the Back Row), died tragically when the set's sleep-deprived truck driver hit her during a cigarette break. In September last year, Engin Kucuktopuz, a set worker for "Kacak Gelinler" (Runaway Brides), died of a heart attack after working 45 hours in three days. "Everything that your mother

ever told you not to do when you were growing up, in our industry you crumple it up and throw it out the window," said Tilbe Saran, actress and secretary general of Turkish Actors' Union.

The union has been keeping a list of dangerous situations since the 1980s that have arisen from eager producers pushing the boundaries of safety: runaway trains, helicopter crashes, out-of-control explosions. "Only in third-world countries do people work like this. But this is the 'Turkish way' of working: No supervision, no safety measures, no respect for life," Saran said. In January, the labor ministry classified drama sets as "dangerous" workplaces, following street protests from the community, including some of Turkey's most famous actors and actresses.

The decision means that the sets will now be subject to inspections at regular intervals determined by the level of risk and will be required to employ safety experts and doctors. But all set workers are employed as freelancers, meaning they lack insurance and production companies are not culpable when an accident or a death occurs on the set.

'Blood money'

According to a 2014 report by consultancy firm Deloitte titled "World's Most Colorful Screen, TV Series Sector in Turkey", Turkish dramas reach up to 400 million viewers in 75 countries. One incentive behind the long duration of the episodes is to reduce the total production cost when exporting a TV series, the report said. A Turkish TV series episode lasts for around 150-180 minutes including ads, up from 45 minutes only a decade ago and long compared to Western standards.

Since 2004, when the television watchdog RTUK declared a minimum of 20 minutes between ad breaks, the channels have been lengthening the durations of TV series to make up for lost income.

"It's a vicious circle: the more popular dramas get at home and abroad, the more famous actors become per episode and the longer the episodes get," said Zafer Ayden, the head of the Turkish Cinema Workers' Union (Sine-Sen). Since the producers of the TV series are essentially subcontractors of broadcasters, productions are prone to be cancelled immediately. Around 50-70 TV series are launched per season, and more than half are cancelled in the same season, mainly due to low ratings. "Some people lose a lot of money in this business, while others make millions. But in the end, it is blood money," Ayden said.

Last year a number of TV actors including Kenan Imirzalioglu, who stars in the popular Turkish drama series "Karadayi", were briefly detained in Istanbul on drug charges. Most of the detainees admitted to drug use, saying that exhausting schedules pushed them to take drugs. Imirzalioglu announced last month that after the finale of "Karadayi", one of the longest-running TV shows in Turkey, he will no longer appear in a television series until the working conditions on the sets change and the length of an episode is reduced to 60 minutes.

Bracing himself for another long day on the set, Altan Donmez, the director of the TV series "Seref Meselesi", adapted from the Italian drama "Onore e Rispetto" (A Matter of Respect) admitted to pushing his own crew too far. "This is because we cannot shoot the episodes in advance for fear of cancella-



TV series crews work in Istanbul.—AFP
tion. In order to produce a 140-minute episode, we have to work up to 16 hours a day for six days," Donmez said. "We should all ask for humane treatment of humans," he said, putting the blame on the TV channels who want to air more advertisements during the shows.—AFP



Doors, Radiohead preserved by Library of Congress

Albums by The Doors, Radiohead and Lauryn Hill will be preserved by the Library of Congress in recognition of their historical contributions. The giant federal library in Washington on Tuesday named 25 new entries to its National Recording Registry, which will preserve the best available copies to safeguard for posterity. The new inductees include the 1967 self-titled debut by The Doors, which featured the hit "Light My Fire" but also the experimental 12-minute song "The End" that was structured like an Indian raga.

The Library of Congress in a statement credited the psychedelic rockers led by Jim Morrison with pushing "artistic, sexual and psychological boundaries." The Library also honored the 1960 self-titled debut by Joan Baez, calling the work seminal for women in folk music and carrying an "authenticity over sentimentality" that hinted at her later activism. Among more recent works, the Library of Congress chose "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill," the fugues singer's introspective 1998 solo album written while she was pregnant. "Hill's vocal range, smooth clear highs and vibrato are stunning. The rapping is rhythmically compelling while always retaining, and frequently exploiting, the natural cadences of conversational speech," the Library of Congress said. While primarily focused on US artists, the Library of Congress selected British experimental rock band Radiohead's 1997 album "OK Computer," saying that the dystopian work "has endured as a statement and a cautionary tale for the digital age."

The Library of Congress also honored the 1969 album "Stand!" by funk giants Sly and the Family Stone, calling it "one of the most heavily sampled records of all time," as well as the single of the Righteous Brothers' 1964 "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" and soul singer Ben E. King's 1960 Gospel-touched song "Stand by Me." Among other works, the Library of Congress selected a 1964 recording of classic New Orleans jazz by pianist Sweet Emma Barrett and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band and the 1949 album for Cole Porter's Broadway musical "Kiss Me, Kate."—AFP



Paul McCartney performs during '12-12-12 The Concert For Sandy Relief'.—AFP

McCartney to headline Lollapalooza festival

Paul McCartney will headline Lollapalooza, the US counter-culture festival turned Chicago fixture, as the ex-Beatle keeps up an active touring schedule. Other acts announced Tuesday for Lollapalooza, which runs from July 31 to August 2, include heavy metal giants Metallica, Grammy-winning British soul singer Sam Smith and the Belgian dance music star Stromae.

McCartney, 72, has an extensive touring schedule in coming months, including headlining spots at Denmark's Roskilde festival and the Firefly festival in the eastern US state of Delaware, as well as a return show in his native Liverpool and his first-ever concert in Seoul. Lollapalooza was launched in 1991 by alternative rockers Jane's Addiction, who envisioned a traveling counter-cultural show as US musical tastes increasingly drifted from the mainstream.

The annual extravaganza folded as critics derided it as increasingly commercial but Lollapalooza re-emerged in 2005 as an annual festival in Chicago's lakeside Grant Park. Lollapalooza has also expanded internationally with festivals in Argentina, Brazil and Chile and, for the first time in September, Germany.—AFP

Oak Ridge Boys, Browns, Martin join country hall

Vocal quartet The Oak Ridge Boys, Jim Ed Brown and his singing sisters, and long-time session guitarist Grady Martin are the newest members of the Country Music Hall of Fame. The Country Music Association announced their selection yesterday. The induction will take place later this year at the museum's annual medallion ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee. The Oak Ridge Boys made the hits "I'll Be True to You," "American Made" and "Elvira" and became known to a non-country audience when they sang back-up to Paul Simon's "Slip Slidin' Away." They've sung behind Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Bill Monroe and others.

While they are being inducted in the modern era artist category, the Boys were founded as the Georgia Clodhoppers in 1943 in Knoxville, Tennessee. They sang so often to staff members and families at the Oak Ridge nuclear facility that the group changed its name to the Oak Ridge Quartet two years later. The modern members—Duane Allen, Joe Bonsall, William Lee Golden and Richard Sterban—are being inducted. Golden is the one with the long, flowing white hair and beard.

"I have seen tears in the eyes of Richard Sterban only two times," Allen said. "The first was when we were made members of the Grand Ole Opry. The second was when we were informed

that we would be among the next inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame." As the Browns, Jim Ed and his sisters Maxine and Bonnie were known for their harmonies and 1950s era hits produced by Chet Atkins, including "I Take the Chance," "I Heard the Bluebirds Sing" and "The Three Bells."

'Overwhelming day'

The trio, occasionally joined by sister Norma, disbanded in 1967 when Maxine and Bonnie retired to raise families. Jim Ed Brown continued with a solo career and also performed duets with Helen Cornelius. The 1977 Country Music Association vocal duo of the year had a hit with "I Don't Want to Marry You." Brown, who called the induction an "overwhelming day" for his family, has also been a television and radio host in Nashville. Grady Martin, who died in 2001, is known more for his work than his name. As part of the Nashville A-Team in the 1950s and 1960s, his guitar is featured on Marty Robbins' "El Paso," Roy Orbison's "Oh Pretty Woman," Brenda Lee's "I'm Sorry," Willie Nelson's "On the Road Again" and Loretta Lynn's "Coal Miner's Daughter."

He played the fiddle in Hank Williams' band and logged 16 years as a guitarist for Nelson before retiring from touring in 1995. Kyle Young, director of the country hall, said the new



The Oak Ridge Boys performs at Marty Stuart's Late Night Jam in Nashville, Tenn.—AP
inductees "represent quality and precision in their music. They exemplify harmony, whether in the blending of their magnificent voices, or in the tightly knit ensemble playing of an accomplished musician."—AP



Idris Elba eyed for villain role in 'Star Trek 3'

Idris Elba is in early talks to play the villain in "Star Trek 3," sources tell Variety. Justin Lin is directing the pic with Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Simon Pegg, Karl Urban, Zoe Saldana and Anton Yelchin all on board to return. J.J. Abrams will produce along with his producing partner Bryan Burke and Skydance's David Ellison. Production is set to start in June. Details of Elba's role are keeping kept under wraps. Early rumors suggest that Klingons would be the main villains in this movie, as they have not had a full presence in previous installments, but sources would not confirm if that was the case. Paramount and Skydance had no comment.

Pegg and Doug Jung are writing the script. Elba stars in Cary Fukunaga's "Beasts of No Nation," which Netflix recently acquired for distribution and is already garnering awards buzz for Elba. He recently finished "Bastille Day" opposite "Cinderella" star Richard Madden and also has "Avengers: Age of Ultron," Disney's "The Jungle Book" and the indie "A Hundred Streets" set to bow in the near future. He is repped by WME.—Reuters

Lauren Bacall's life possessions on sale in New York

Everything but the kitchen sink would be one way to describe the staggering array of possessions owned by Lauren Bacall that go under the hammer in New York next week. From fine art to kitchenware, from avant garde to the kitsch: hundreds of items collected and loved by the Hollywood siren go on sale Tuesday and Wednesday at Bonhams auction house. The collection is nothing if not eclectic. It includes jewelry and clothes, Aboriginal and African art, English and French furniture and items bought in antique shops around the world.

Items that date from her marriage to legendary on-screen co-star Humphrey Bogart and sculptures by English artist Henry Moore are among the most prized items. "One thing with Lauren Bacall, when she collected she didn't collect because of value or potential value," said Jon King, vice president and director of Bonhams in New York. "An item that cost \$100, if it appealed to her she would buy it. If it was \$100,000, if it appealed to her, she would buy it... her aesthetic sense that's all that mattered," King told AFP.

Bacall greatly admired Moore, visiting him in England and treasuring his work. She kept most of the small maquettes next to her bed and the most expensive of which is valued at \$40-60,000. At the lower end of the spectrum, die-hard fans with a several hundred dollars might be able to snap up some walking sticks. Bacall, one of Hollywood's great golden age actresses, died last August aged 89 in her nine-room home overlooking Central Park, which is also on the market for \$26 million.

The proceeds of next week's auctions will go to her three children. All 740 lots—from Yves Saint Laurent evening wear to a cheese slicer, silver tea strainer, suitcases and papier mache ornaments-filled Bacall's plush Manhattan apartment, and have toured the world attracting potential buyers from China to France. Above all they reflect Bacall's personal taste.

Clinton invitation

From the Bogart years, before he died from cancer in 1957, are his black granite games table and a pair of silver candelabras from their marital home in Los Angeles.

Many of the lots have associations with some of her famous friends drawn from the literary, musical and political worlds. There is a landscape by English playwright Noel Coward, an invitation to Bill Clinton's inaugural ball complete with handwritten notes from him and wife Hillary, and a lithograph of daffodils painted by the late senator Edward Kennedy. Bacall was a staunch Democrat and is photographed in the catalogue at a birthday party of Hillary's in New York.

"She was known to be a friend of Democrats. She admired Bill Clinton. She admired Obama too. She thought that he was very strong and decisive and just a very good man," said King. The piano, used by Bacall to rehearse for Broadway musicals, was also played at parties by composer Leonard Bernstein, with whom her youngest son, Sam Robards, remembers singing Christmas carols.

There are Ashanti scales from Ghana used to weigh gold, a spoon from the Democratic Republic of Congo, combs from the Ivory Coast, and two headrests from South Africa. The auction house said Bacall became interested in African art while on location for "The African Queen" starring Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, which was filmed in Congo and Uganda. Other items from around the world include Indian miniatures, a Japanese portable brass tea set and a marble table inscribed with "in the name of Allah" in Arabic calligraphy.

King, who forged a close relationship with the star, said Bacall would have mixed feelings about the auction. "She'd be very happy to see the response from her fan base. But she loved each and every one of these and probably, I don't know, she'd be sad that it's being disbanded I think." He says it's possible some of the items could end up in museums, but expects the majority to go to private collectors. Interest has been "tremendous" from Hong Kong and mainland China, as well as Tokyo, Los Angeles and Paris, Bacall's favorite city, he said.—AFP



Some of the items from the Lauren Bacall Collection at Bonhams in New York.—AFP photos



A lithograph by Senator Edward Kennedy titled 'Daffodils'.